



# Through the Mirror

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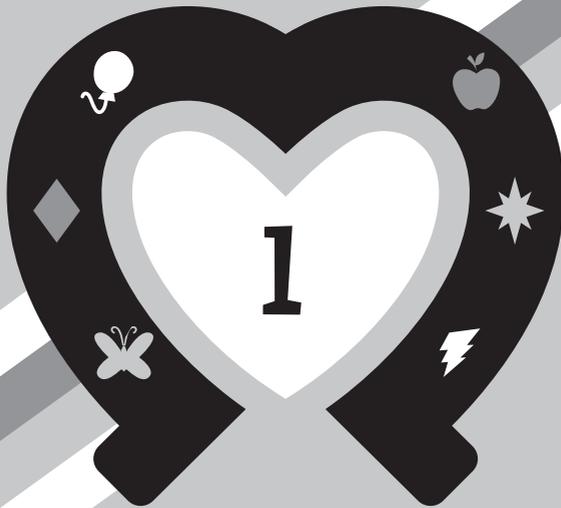
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CHAPTER



# The Princess Summit



The castle of the Crystal Empire sparkled brilliantly in the midday sun. Ponies pranced around the Kingdom, running their daily errands in the market or playing outside in the gorgeous weather. In fact, everypony was so busy that they didn't notice that seven visitors from afar had just arrived

through the front gate. It was six ponies and one small dragon, to be exact.

The recently crowned Princess Twilight Sparkle trotted along with her friends, pulling her suitcase behind her and taking in the dazzling scene. She loved visiting her brother's kingdom—this must have been her fourth or fifth visit so far! But for once, it wasn't because somepony needed saving!

This time, Twilight was here for another reason, and of course, her best friends had insisted on being there to support her. Okay, and maybe to sample a few Crystal berry tarts or check out the Equestria Games stadium if there was time. Either way, it was comforting to have her best ponies there with her.

“Whoo-ee! Your very first Princess Summit. You must be over the moon, Twilight!”



exclaimed Applejack, turning to her royal friend. Twilight Sparkle had taken up the lead, as royal ponies were known to do. Twilight furrowed her brow in concern and looked back at her crew.

“Well, I *am* excited. But, to be honest...” Twilight stalled, then admitted, “I’m a little nervous, too.” Twilight hadn’t been a princess for very long, after all. Even after everything she’d learned from Princess Cadance and the Crystal Heart Spell, she still felt that there was much more to discover every day. Twilight just hoped she would have *something* to contribute to the Princess Summit.

Pinkie Pie trotted up to join them, a wide smile on her face and an extra bounce in her prance. “You’re just *nervicited!*” Her curly fuchsia mane bounced wildly as she spoke. “It’s like you want to jump up and



down and yell, ‘Yay me!’” She took a soaring leap into the air. A ray of sunlight glinted against her pearly white smile and sparkled. All of a sudden, she became serious and her face fell. “But you also want to curl up in a teeny-tiny ball and hide at the same time!” Pinkie fell to the ground and curled herself up, rocking back and forth.

Rarity and Rainbow Dash exchanged a skeptical look at the dramatic display before Pinkie Pie popped back up and patted Twilight reassuringly. “Don’t worry, Twilight. We’ve all been there,” Pinkie said knowingly.

Fluttershy, who had floated into the air for a moment to stretch her pale yellow wings, landed gracefully on the ground. “I’m there almost every day,” she agreed in her soft voice. Up front, Twilight Sparkle

took in her surroundings with just the slightest trace of hesitation. Even though she had visited the Empire several times before, the first glimpse of the Crystal Castle always stirred something inside her. It was just so big and beautiful. And intimidating. She took a deep breath and kept walking.

Applejack, who was trotting right beside her, noticed Twilight's frown. She was just about to toss a few more comforting words the princess's way when Rarity gasped in shock, stopping all six ponies in their tracks. "Sorry, darlings, but I just noticed that Twilight's not wearing her crown!" Rarity was always shocked that Twilight still felt self-conscious about wearing it.

"Don't worry, Rarity," Twilight assured her. "It's safe here in my bag."

"But you're attending a Princess Summit!



I'm telling you, if I had a gorgeous crown like that I'd never take it off!" Rarity exclaimed. "Why, I'd sleep in the thing."

As soon as Twilight and her friends entered the foyer of the Crystal Castle, her nerves began to melt away like ice cream on a warm summer day. The Empire was starting to feel a little more like a home away from home to her. Twilight attempted to hold her head high in order to give off an air of confidence to anypony who might be watching, but the sound of royal trumpets suddenly blared through the castle. Twilight was startled by the loud racket and stumbled. Unfortunately, being a princess didn't automatically make a pony graceful.

"Ooof!" Twilight grunted as she braced herself on the chest of a handsome Crystal Royal Guard with a bright blue mane. He

leaned forward to help her regain her balance with a small smile on his face. Then he remembered his duty and immediately snapped back to attention in time to announce her arrival.

“Her Highness, Princess Twilight Sparkle!” he projected his voice into the echoey Crystal corridor. Twilight blushed a little more than usual at the attention, though she didn’t know why. It’s not like she even knew this particular royal guard pony.

Nearby, Pinkie smiled wide with delight at all the pomp and circumstance. It just so happened that she loved pomp and also circumstance. But *together*—they were super-duper fun!

Suddenly, Princess Cadance, Princess Luna, and Princess Celestia delicately trotted up to meet the six ponies and Spike.

The ponies of the Crystal Royal Guard straightened themselves to appear even taller than before.

Cadance smiled warmly. Her pink-and-purple mane cascaded into soft waves around her face, and she wore her own shimmering golden tiara so confidently, it seemed like it was a part of her. Maybe someday Twilight would, too. “Twilight! It’s been so long since I’ve seen you!” Cadance nuzzled her young sister-in-law.

Princess Celestia stepped forward to join them, looking just as elegant and regal as the young princesses. Her pastel mane and tail flowed behind her. “We have so much to discuss. But it can wait until tomorrow. You all look tired from your journey.” A quick glance at the pack of weary travelers was enough to confirm that she was right. Applejack, Rain-

bow Dash, and Fluttershy all had dark circles forming under their eyes. Rarity's mane was looking a bit frizzy. And Pinkie Pie was twitching a little bit. But that could have been from excitement—it was hard to tell with her.

The ponies nodded in agreement and happily accepted Celestia's invitation to make their way to the guest quarters of the castle. As they hoofed their way down the hallway, their eyelids drooped with the heavy weight of sleep. Rarity was the only pony who remained alert—but that was just because she couldn't help but gawk at every gem and crystal encrusted in the archways and window frames. It was the type of decor she'd always envisioned herself living with.

It was really too bad that the friends were all either too dazzled or sleepy to notice that somepony was nearby. Somepony who

was hiding in the shadows and watching their every move. Somepony who wanted to remain hidden.



Being the pony she was, Twilight couldn't go to sleep until all her belongings were unpacked and stowed away safely in the appropriate places. There had to be a certain order to things, whether she was at home in Ponyville or not. Routines helped her to feel like the same old Twilight she'd always been. Twilight's purple Unicorn horn glowed as she used her magic to put each item from her suitcase folded in a drawer, hung in the wardrobe, or placed on the bookshelf. (She'd only packed a couple of books.) Spike watched with mild interest,

his attention being tested by the abundance of jewels everywhere. His gem-hoarding dragon instincts were starting to take over.

Twilight lifted the princess crown from her bag and tried to position it on her head. The delicate gold tiara supported a shimmering magenta gemstone—an Element of Harmony, a very powerful stone infused with Magic. But instead of looking pretty like Cadance’s, the shining tiara dipped awkwardly down to one side, smushing Twilight’s bangs. One look at her reflection confirmed Twilight’s anxieties. She was no princess, and here she was at the Princess Summit! A summit of princesses!

“What’s wrong, Twilight?” asked Spike, suddenly snapping out of his daydream about a peanut butter and *jewelly* sandwich.

The crown slipped a little farther down

Twilight's face. It was no use. It floated up off her head as she used her horn to magically put it down gently on a table. "I'm just...worried, I guess. Princess Cadance was given the Crystal Empire to rule over. What if now that I'm a princess, Celestia expects me to lead a kingdom of my own?" Twilight stared at the crown, sitting lonely on a small, ornate table by her bed.

Spike marveled at the idea of *his* Twilight running a kingdom. Maybe she'd make him into some royal advisor or better yet—jewel commissioner. "That. Would. Be. Awesome."

Twilight frowned. "No. It wouldn't!" She began to pace around. "Just because I have this crown and these new wings, it doesn't mean I'd be a good leader."

"Sure, you would," Spike said, using his

last ounce of energy to cheer up his best friend. A wave of exhaustion washed over him. “Now come on. You should get some shut-eye. Big day tomorrow!” And with that, he crawled into the tiny bed that was set up next to Twilight’s and made himself snug in his blanket. A short moment later, he was fast asleep, sucking on his claw.

It wasn’t so easy for the new princess, however. She was absolutely desperate to find a comfortable position in which to rest her new wings. For the next ten minutes, she squirmed and stretched. She rolled and reached. She wiggled and wormed. Twilight had never realized how much work the feathery things could be! As she twisted around in her bed, Twilight made a mental note to discuss optimal wing-sleeping positions with Fluttershy and Rainbow Dash

in the morning. Finally, she found a good spot. *That's better*, she thought, closing her eyes at last.

*Sproing!* Suddenly, her left wing popped out of the covers. Twilight sighed heavily. Apparently, there were a lot of things about her new life that were going to take some getting used to—summits, wings, and crowns were only the start. But, hey, at least she didn't have to sleep in her crown.



CHAPTER



# Sunset Shimmer Strikes at Night



Once all the little ponies were safely asleep in their plush Crystal rooms, the castle became shrouded in stillness—the kind that only happens in the middle of the night. In the daytime, the castle was filled with light and reflections that danced with one another, creating rainbow prisms on

everypony who walked through its halls. But now every corner was met with a soft, eerie glow from the giant apple pie-shaped moon. It raked in through the glass windows and gave the whole place a super-spooky feeling.

Luckily for the red-and-golden-maned Unicorn who now crept through the corridor, it was easy to hide in the shadows. She was careful to tread lightly on her hooves. Any sudden noise could wake just one pony—or dragon—and ruin her entire mission. That yellow-and-pink Pegasus looked like an especially light snoozer. The last thing she needed was some scaredy-pony causing a stir and messing everything up. No—this was far too important a task to risk messing up.

It wasn't long before she found just the room she was looking for. The quarters of the newly "royal" Twilight Sparkle. Now if only

she could get past that sleeping baby dragon and the princess herself—everything she had ever wanted was within reach of her own little hooves. And a mere few minutes' time.

She pushed the heavy door, and it creaked open with little resistance. The room was illuminated by the moonlight, just like the castle corridor. She quickly took stock of the sleeping forms of both the princess and the dragon. It was no easy task to maintain her silence as she crept toward the bedside table. Toward her *true* destiny.

The red-and-golden-maned pony used her magic to levitate the very object of her desire and move it over to her. It looked even more beautiful up close. Twilight Sparkle's glittering crown was going to be hers.

The job was almost done when, suddenly, the baby dragon rolled over, mumbling. The

Unicorn froze. She needed to be even more careful than she thought! That was a close one. *Too* close.

She stayed still until a loud snore came from the dragon's direction. It was the signal she needed to complete the deed. A wicked look flashed across her sweet golden face. Her next move was swift. She gently placed an identical replica of the royal crown in place of the original and snuck back toward the door.

But just as the Unicorn tried to step over the restless dragon, her hoof became caught in one of his arms. She immediately lost her balance and crashed to the floor, causing both the dragon and the princess to wake with a jolt!

"Huh? What?" Spike said, rubbing his eyes.

The golden Unicorn scrambled to her hooves in a panic. As she galloped toward the door, she stole a glance back at the confused princess. A ray of moonlight shone onto the mysterious pony and glinted off the stolen item that she was shoving in her bag. Twilight sucked in her breath in pure shock.

“My crown! She’s got my crown!” she cried into the night. Twilight jumped into action and leaped out of bed, Spike following close behind. As she chased the thief down the hall, Twilight was filled with a sense of dread. What would happen if she couldn’t catch that pony? She shouldn’t have been so careless and left the precious crown out like that! What would Celestia say? Twilight knew she wasn’t fit to be a princess yet, if ever. She just *had* to catch that Unicorn or risk everypony finding out how truly unroyal she was.

As she gained ground, running as fast as her hooves would carry her down the hallway, Twilight got a better look at the thief. The pony in question had a mane the colors of fire and a cutie mark to match. It was in the shape of a sun. Twilight didn't recognize her at all, but that didn't mean much. She had met so many new ponies since the coronation that sometimes it was difficult to keep track of them all.

"Stop! Thief!" Twilight shouted in desperation into the darkness. The commotion must have woken everypony in the castle, because doors on either side of the hallway started to burst open. Applejack, Rarity, Fluttershy, Rainbow Dash, and Pinkie Pie all emerged from their respective rooms, looking sleepy.

"She's stolen my crown!" Twilight yelled

as she sped past them, with Spike two steps behind. The ponies barely had time to register what she'd said. They dutifully took off in the direction of the thief as well, hoping that they could help. Their friend was in trouble!

Twilight didn't understand where this Unicorn was going. The golden pony turned and galloped through the corridors without any hesitation whatsoever. She obviously knew her way around the castle and had a specific destination in mind. Maybe there was a secret exit? Or a hiding place?

Twilight kept up her speed, hoping at the very least that a member of the Royal Guard would soon step in. But a moment later, Twilight saw that there was no need for that. The Unicorn burst through the double doors of the last room at the end of

the hall, and Twilight knew that this was it. The Unicorn was cornered. In fact, she was *unicornered!*

“Stop!” Twilight shouted as she entered the room, her friends coming up close behind her. “You have nowhere to run.”

The Unicorn’s face turned to panic as she realized there were now six ponies and one dragon against her. She clambered to the window, looking back at her pursuers. The Unicorn faltered, tripping over her own hooves.

Her face fell as the bag with the crown inside flew through the air. The precious Element of Harmony was headed straight for a massive mirror. Everypony watched, completely frozen in place. But instead of crashing into the glass as they expected it to, the bag disappeared the moment it

made contact with the mirror. It was just... gone!

Applejack gasped. “How did that—?”

“What did you do with my crown?!” Twilight exclaimed, thoroughly confused.

The golden Unicorn stood up. She smirked wickedly at the stunned Ponyville ponies.

“Sorry it had to be this way, *Princess*.” The thief sneered before diving through the mirror herself. The ponies turned to one another in shock. A pony walking through a solid object? They’d seen a lot of unbelievable things in Equestria, but nothing like this.

Finally, Fluttershy broke the silence. “Who *was* that?” she whispered. It was what they were all thinking. Too bad it was a question that nopony knew the answer to.